

# INSTRUCTIONS

F O R

Cultivating and Raising

# F L A X.

COLLECTED FROM

The Best Papers hitherto Publish'd on the Subject

AND ENLARGED

By *H----- W-----*, of *Waterford*.

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## Choice of the Soil.

**G**OOD Lay Ground, or Land that promises a good Crop of Barley, will produce good Flax; old Potatoe ground may also do very well, when properly prepar'd. But Lands newly Dunged, or such as abound with Flags, Rushes, or other Weeds, which betoken the Land being wet or Spuey, will not do for Fax; Hot Sandy Ground and that which is inclined to Turf, are also quite improper for this Crop.

## Plowing and preparing the Ground.

**L**A Y ground ought to be Fallow-ed, and receive as many Plowings and Harrowings, as are necessary to reduce it into a very fine Mould, as shou'd all ground intended for Flax; and before you sow your Seed

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Seed let all the Clods be broken small, and the Stones and Weeds be carefully taken off the Ground.

Deep and Rich ground, not too moist, shou'd be Plowed Shallow, about four inches deep will be sufficient, the Ridges very broad and flat, and the Furrows Shallow; and if there is any danger of Water falling on it from higher grounds, let such Water be diverted another Way.

Loamey Soil lying flat shou'd be Plowed deeper, the Ridges also shou'd be narrower (say eight or ten feet) and the Furrows deeper, to carry off the Water, which lying on the ground will ruin the Flax.

Clay ground lying flat must be Plowed deep in proportion to the Stifness of the Clay, and have three Plowings at least; The first in the

common Season for Fallowing, the second a Cross the former, in *September* or *October*, then must it be extremely well Harrowed, not only to make the Ground fine, but to gather the Weeds and Grass, which are to be so placed, as to be plowed down at the third Plowing, and this last shou'd be done the latter end of *March* or in *Apri<sup>l</sup>* : The Ridges on the third Plowing shou'd run the same way as the first, and be higher or lower, and the Furrows deeper or shallower, in proportion to the Stiffness of the Soil.

And proper Drains must be made between the Furrows to communicate with each other, so as effectually to carry off all Water from the ground, after this your Land must be finely harrowed, and clear'd from  
all



all Lumps, Stones, and Weeds, as before directed, then is your ground fit to receive the Seed.

### Seed and Sowing.

**G**OOD Seed is generally of a Brownish Yellow colour, the Husk or Grain, thick and plump, the Kernel white and hard, with the end of each grain a little inclined to turn up; Bad Seed is more flat or broad, of a paler Yellow, or inclined to Black; The best we now receive from Foreign parts, is from the *British* Colonies in *America*, and particularly from *New-Yorke*, and *Philadelphia*, which is found to Answer much better in *Ireland*, than any from *Holland* or *Germany* do.

The quantity of Seed to a Plantation Acre of good medling Land, rather

rather Coarse than Rich, is from three Bushels and an half to four Bushels; where the Land is rich and strong, as in most parts of the Counties of *Tipperary* and *Limerick*, four Bushels and an half may do very well. But nothing is more Injurious to flax than sowing the seed too thick, as it cannot then become strong, or Ripen well, but generally lodges, and rots before ripe. Great care is necessary to have your Seed sown equally thick, which is an Art only to be attain'd by Practise; when your Seed is sown, Bush-Harrow it lightly, disengaging your Harrow as often as needful from the Grass, or Weeds it may gather, which, carry off the ground; Then wou'd it be proper to Roll it with a wooden Roller, drawn by a light Horse, but this must be done in dry Weather only.

Weeding.

## Weeding.

**A**LL Flax must be carefully weeded when four or five Inches high, and it is better to cut the Weeds at the Root with a sharp Knife than to pull them, as pulling Weeds is apt to loose the Flax, and hurts it much; Your Crop cannot be injured by lying upon it while it is weeding, but standing, or walking on it spoils the Flax. It sometimes becomes necessary to Weed the Flax a second time, but this shou'd not be done after it is six or seven Inches high.

## Pulling and Rippling.

**T**O know when your Flax is ripe, or fit for Pulling, observe when the Boughs, or Bowls, are turn'd Brown, and the leaves towards the  
Roots

Roots grow Yellow, and fall from the Stalk, then Pull it: Observing carefully to keep the Roots all one way, and as even as possible: And to pull the finest Flax by it self, and the coarsest by it self, and keep them seperate through the whole Rotting, or Watering, because the Coarse Flax is much sooner Rotted than the fine: And if they are pulled and Rotted together promiscuously, the Coarse Flax may be much injured, or near Rotten before the fine is Rotted.

Tye your Flax up as it is Pulled, in such small sheaves as a Man can conveniently hold in his Hand to Ripple, and then the Teeth of the Comb will easily admitt the whole handful to pass down to the board on which the Comb is fixed: these sheaves, when Rippled, may be enlarged,



larged, before you carry your Flax  
to Water, to the size of a Mans  
Leg; or rather larger.

### Watering.

**W**ATERING, or RATING your Flax  
is the nicest and most diffi-  
cult part of your Work; To do it  
properly, great regard must be had  
to the Water you use; Clean stand-  
ing Water is certainly the best, such  
as Fresh Water Lakes, or Loughs;  
where these cannot be had, Ponds  
must be made, either in Clay or  
Gravelly Ground, and must be so  
situated that they may be filled, and  
kept full of Water the dryest Sum-  
mer; and that from some Running  
stream if possible, for the softer the  
Water is, the better. These Ponds  
shou'd be about 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide, and  
not

not less than 5 feet deep and may be of any convenient length, so that the depth of Water be equal from end to end of the Pond.

Runing streams are improper; because, if swift, they will tear the Hurl from the Bunn or stem, and reduce your quantity of Flax. Hard Water that partakes of any mineral is quite unfit for your purpose, and Bog Water shou'd not be used, as it generally stains the Flax with a disagreeable Colour, which the best Bleaching cannot recover.

Your watering Ponds being thus prepared lett them be sometime filled, that the Water may have time to soften, Lay your Flax in Ranges over each other until you raise it within 14 or 15 Inches of the surface of the Water, cover it then with  
Ferns

Ferns two or three Inches thick, and over that lay stones sufficient to keep all under Water. Care shou'd be taken to have the Ponds kept constantly full of Water, tho' no Current shou'd run through them, lest it Check the Fermentation, and render the Watering more tedious.

When your Flax has been three or four days in Water, some few straws shou'd be drawn out, which bend, if they break readily, and the Harl quits the straw, or Bunn, the Flax is sufficiently Water'd; But if the straw does not readily break, nor the Harl quit the Bunn, Then must you repeat the Experiment twice a day, until you find it sufficiently Water'd. No stated time can be fixed for watering Flax, as it depends much on the quality of

the Water, as well as on the Heat, or Coldness of the Weather; In warm Weather it will Rat much sooner than in Cold Weather.

Your fine and Coarse Flax shou'd ever be water'd seperately as the fine will require more time than the Coarse; if Water'd together, your coarse flax (as mention'd before Page 8) will be much injured, if not Rotten, before the fine be water'd.

If you wou'd have any of your Flax a *silver Blue*, you may, by Rating it in the same Pond that a former parcel was water'd in, giving it longer time for rating and no more supplies of water than will cover the stones; Let as little water run over the Banks as possible.

A *Deeper Blue* may be made by  
Rating



Rating a third parcel in the same Water, that the *silver Blues* were rated in, This is sometimes done in *England* for Threads, which require no other Dye.

### Grassing Flax.

**W**HEN your Flax is sufficiently water'd, and clean wash'd out of your Pond, or Lough; take off the Bands and spread it very thin on a new mowed Meadow, or other short Grass, keeping the roots (as on pulling) all one way, and as even as possible, leave a space between your first and second rows, about the length of a sheaf, or more, to preserve room for turning it on the Grass.

When you observe that the upper part of your flax, by means of the rains, or Dew, has attain'd a  
good

good Colour, turn it with great care, by putting a rod or wand, under as much as you can easily raise at once, and laying it on the side that was up before ; until this last side shall acquire the same Colour of the first.

In case you see the Grass grow long through the Flax, before it is of a proper white Colour, then raise it a little towards the top of the Grass with a wand, lest it Mildew by lying too long, which the Air by getting under it will prevent.

### Cautions on Grassing Flax.

**Y**OU will sometimes have part of your Flax on the Grass that has not been sufficiently rated ; To discover this take a little of the Flax you suspect to be under water'd, and holding one Hand above the other, at a little distance ; Crush the Flax  
between

between both Hands, and rub it ;  
 And if the Bunn, or inside, breaks  
 readily, and the Harl, or rine, sepe-  
 rates well from it, all is right. But  
 if otherwise, this Flax must lye longer  
 on the Grass, until the Bunn breaks  
 freely, and parts on rubbing as above.

On the other Hand, if your Flax  
 shou'd have continued a little too  
 long in the Pond, and is over rated ;  
 Observe in a day or two after first  
 spreading on the Grass, when it be-  
 comes stiff, whither the Harl does  
 of it self quit the Bunn, or whither  
 a stalk will strip from end to end, and  
 if the Bunn breaks ; Such Flax  
 shou'd immediately be set up in  
 sheaves on the Butts in the Field,  
 bound very loose at the upper end,  
 and so remain until quite dry, then  
 shou'd it be tighter bound in the  
 middle and carried Home. Rain

Rain will not hurt your Flax stand-  
ing on the Butts in the field, yet  
should it not be left out longer than  
a dry day offers to carry it home;  
where it shou'd be carefully preserved  
from wet, or damp of any kind.

The *silver blues*, and any Flax made  
darker Blues, should be well rotted  
in the Pond, as it must not remain  
longer on the Grass than two or three  
days, just to stiffen it; when this is  
done put it on the Butts, and stook  
it in the field, until full dry to car-  
ry Home.

### Saving Flax-seed.

CLEAN your Bowls from all Leaves and trash  
as soon as may be after Rippling, dry them very  
well either on Cloths in the Sun or very thin spread  
on Lofts, or Floors (well Air'd) keeping the seed and  
Bowls all together, Airing and turning them, or Sun-  
ing them, every day until quite dry; And frequent-  
ly after, to preserve them so; until sowing time when  
(and not before) you are to separate the seed from the  
Bowls, and clean the Seed Effectually.

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